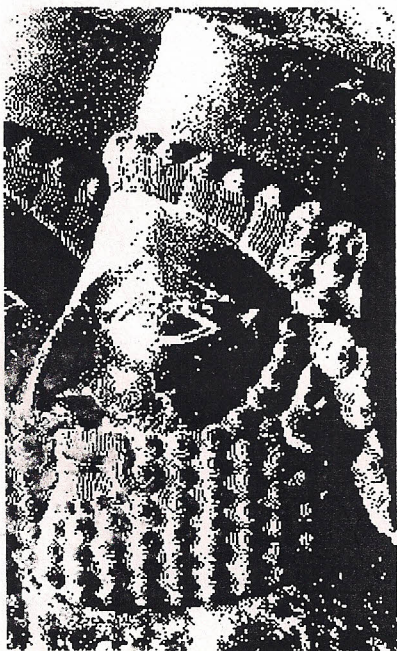


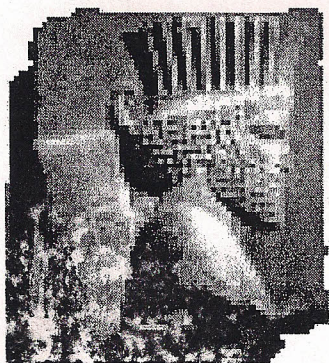
The Persian Mede captivity

539 B.C.- 331 B.C.



The new masters of the ancient world belonged *to the East Indians, children of Elam see Genesis 10:22 and Esther 1:1*. They were known as the Persians. This 5th-cent. B.C. glazed brick frieze is from the harem of Xerxes, the royal household at Persepolis. Their beards are carefully arranged in little curls in Persian fashion. At the heart of the imperial Persian army was the elite bodyguard known as the Ten Thousand Immortals, whose ranks included Medes, or Elamites. *However the Israelite, Zerubbabel of the tribe of Judah was one of the Kings top 3 Bodyguards read 1st Esdras 3:4, & 4:13.*

The ten thousand Immortals



The 'Immortals', were the elite of the Persian army. They were hand picked for their bravery and so rewarded. Their name coming from the way their number never fell below ten thousand. The division was always kept up to full strength, retired or fallen soldiers were always replaced. In this way their strength was always 10,000 men, never more or never less. Entry to the ranks of the Immortals was restricted to those with Mede or Elamite ancestry. Exceptions were made however for those with exceptional fighting skills

coupled with loyalty to the King.



Their appearance was said to be magnificance, they glittered with gold armlets and necklaces. vast quantities of which they wore about their persons The elaborate robes seen on the stone reliefs at Persepolis and glazed tiles of Susa are considered to be their parade dress, on campaign they wore the more practical Median dress. This included a richly embroidered knee-length tunic, a tiara to cover the head, (a soft woollen or felt cap) and a corset with metal plates or scales worn under his tunic.

Two of the Ten Thousand Immortals, glazed bricks from the Palace of Artaxerxes at Susa, Achaemenian ...

Courtesy of the Musee du Louvre,

Paris; photograph, Cliche Musees Nationaux, Paris

1st Esdras 3:1: Now when Darius reigned, he made a great feast unto all his subjects, and unto all his household, and unto all the princes of Media and Persia,

2: And to all the governors and captains and lieutenants that were under him, from India unto Ethiopia, of an hundred twenty and seven provinces.

3: And when they had eaten and drunken, and being satisfied were gone home, then Darius the king went into his bedchamber, and slept, and soon after awaked.

4: Then three young men, that were of the guard that kept the king's body, spake one to another;

The King had declared a contest among the Immortal guardsmen regarding what is strongest upon the earth and that the wisest of them shall be granted riches and wealth. They each wrote

1st Esdras 4:13: Then the third, who had spoken of women, and of the truth, (this was Zerubbabel) began to speak.

Zerubbabel was declared wisest of all.

1st Esdras 4:42: Then said the king unto him, Ask what thou wilt more than is appointed in the writing, and we will give it thee, because thou art found wisest; and thou shalt sit next me, and shalt be called my cousin.

43: Then said he unto the king, Remember thy vow, which thou hast vowed to build Jerusalem, in the day when thou camest to thy kingdom,

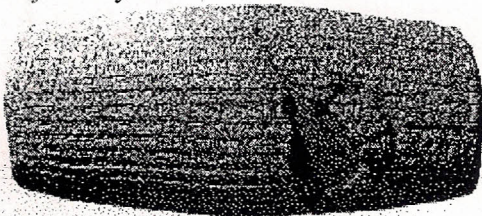
44: And to send away all the vessels that were taken away out of Jerusalem, which Cyrus set apart, when he vowed to destroy Babylon, and to send them again thither.

45: Thou also hast vowed to build up the temple, which the Edomites burned when Judea was made desolate by the Chaldees.

46: And now, O lord the king, this is that which I require, and which I desire of thee, and this is the princely liberality proceeding from thyself: I desire therefore that thou make good the vow, the performance whereof with thine own mouth thou hast vowed to the King of heaven.

47: Then Darius the king stood up, and kissed him, and wrote letters for him unto all the treasurers and lieutenants and captains and governors, that they should safely convey on their way both him, and all those that go up with him to build Jerusalem.

As the policy of Assyrian and Babylonian kings had been to deport conquered peoples to other parts of the empire, the Persian policy was the opposite and much more humane. They would send captives back to their land, as mentioned on the fired clay Persian "Cyrus Cylinder" as follows:



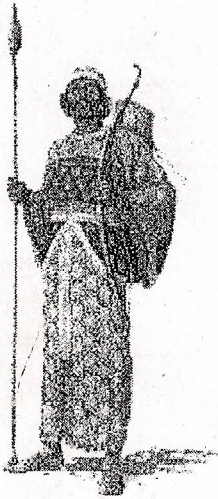
"... to Ashur and Susa, Agade, Ashnunak, Zamban, Meturnu, Deri, with the territory of the land of Gutium, the cities on the other side of the Tigris ... the gods who dwelt in them, I brought back to their places ... all their inhabitants I collected and restored them to their dwelling places ... I liberated those who dwelt in Babylon from the yoke that chafed them ... I am Cyrus, king of all things, the great king ... king of all the earth ..."

He also declares that he made good the wrong done by his predecessors by sending captives home, helping in the rebuilding of their temples and the return of their gods.

This edict included the Jews. No doubt God had ordained Cyrus, who was a noble and just monarch, to issue a decree releasing the Jews. The remarkably powerful prophesy of Isaiah is captivating in the light of history for it was written 150 years before Cyrus:

Isaiah 44:28-45:1

Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-- to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut ..."



Persia was the mountainous plateau to the east of the lower Tigris-Euphrates Valley. The Persian empire was larger than the Babylonian and Assyrian empires, extending eastward to India and reaching westward to Greece. Its capitals were Persepolis and Susa. As a world empire it lasted 200 years (539-331 B.C.)

The Medes and Persians ruled jointly, sometimes called the –Persian-Mede Empire because the Persians became greater.

Read Daniel 7:5, three main Babylonian strongholds they overthrew were Egypt, Ethiopia and Sabea; read Isaiah 45:14.

The Persian Kings were:

Cyrus (538-529 B.C.) Conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to return.

Cambyes (529-522 B.C.) Stopped work on the Temple.

Darius I (521-485 B.C.) Authorized completion of the Temple.

Xerxes (Ahasuerus) (485-465 B.C.) Esther was his Queen.

Artaxerxes I (465-425 B.C.) Authorized Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem.

Xerxes II (424 B.C.)

Darius II (423-405 B.C.)

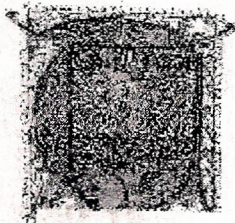
Artaxerxes II (405-358 B.C.)

Artaxerxes III (358-338 B.C.)

Arses (338-335)

Darius III (335-331 B.C.) He was defeated by Alexander the Great (331 B.C.) at the famous battle of Arbela, near Nineveh. This was the fall of Persia and the rise of Greece.

The Return from Babylon



The people of Judah were horribly distressed. They lost their home, their city, their pride, their Temple, the ark of the covenant, and they were taken as prisoners to Babylon, the homeland of idolatry. But God raised up great men to remind them of Jeremiah's prophecies, that they would only be there for 70 years. Babylon would not be their home:

Jeremiah 29:10-14

For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive."

They would return and the temple would be rebuilt, and the Messiah would still come. Daniel and Ezekiel sought to keep the true faith alive.

The Decree of Cyrus

By 538 BC. Babylon had passed into history and the Medo-Persian Empire took its place. Cyrus the Persian issued a decree to allow the Jews to go back to their land, and with the blessing of The Persian Empire.

***According to Ezra 1:3-6, A portion of Judah, Benjamin and Levi returned along with a small remnant of the other 10 tribes returned to repopulate Israel. Another portion of the Israelites remained in the lands of their captivity now having liberty and yet another portion of the 10 tribes came to the so called Americas- read 2nd Esdras 13:40-47.**

Zerubbabel

The first move back to Israel was led by Zerubbabel, of the house of David. He was the only one of royal blood to pay any attention to the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 2) in accordance to the Most Highs prophecies. When he returned, he found just rubble. No temple, torn down walls, and **strange nations put their by the Assyrians,** read 2 Kings 17:24-34.

The strange nations claimed to believe in the Most High and wanted to help build the Temple.

Ezra 4:1: Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

2: Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

3: But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4: Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

Zerubbabel laid the foundations for a new temple, built an altar and worshipped the Lord. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah taught Israel not to lose hope and urged the Jews to help build the temple. They finished the work on the Temple in 516 BC. (Exactly 70 years).

Ezra and Nehemiah

58 years later (458 BC) more Jews returned (Ezra 7) under the leadership of Ezra. 12 years later, Nehemiah, requested permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to govern Judea. He arrived in 444 BC. Despite much opposition, Nehemiah completed this seemingly hopeless task in 52 days. Then a revival followed. Ezra and Nehemiah canonized the books of the Old Testament. They read aloud to the people and gave interpretation. About 40 years later, the prophet Malachi condemned the people for slipping back into their sinful ways.



Alexander's the Greats marching army.